



SUCCESS STORY

Gardening in a Mini-Greenhouse

A mini-greenhouse enables a farmer to grow vegetables for his family.



Sharap's kids enjoy fresh vegetables in their new greenhouse in Nookan Region, Jalalabat Oblast, southern Kyrgyzstan.
Photo: WUASP

USAID programs bring volunteer American experts to help Kyrgyz farmers introduce new water and cost efficient techniques for growing vegetables.

This year, Sharap Bakirov, farmer in Nookan Rayon, Jalalabat oblast, southern Kyrgyzstan has for the first time harvested tomatoes and cucumbers grown in his own backyard garden.

Sharap lives at the tail-end of the irrigation system and never used his backyard for gardening due to water shortage. The family was buying all their vegetables in the local market.

To assist Sharap and other farmers in his situation, the USAID-funded Water User Association Support Program and the Farmer to Farmer projects, implemented by Winrock International, invited a greenhouse expert to help utilize the unused land. The volunteer American expert Martin Connaughton suggested that Sharap and other farmers in his situation build a low-cost mini greenhouse to produce vegetables for their families. Connaughton helped Sharap construct a small 28 square-meter greenhouse attached to his cow-shed. Once the greenhouse was up, the American specialist introduced an innovative technique to minimize the water use for the plants. Instead of planting the vegetables in the soil, the expert suggested that Sharap use sacks to hold the plants. Using this approach, Sharap and his wife Gulipa planted 150 tomato and 150 cucumber seedlings. To irrigate the vegetables, he manually watered on each plant, and the sacks helped contain the moisture close to the plants, preventing the water from seeping away into the ground.

By the end of summer, Sharap harvested approximately 450 kilograms of tomatoes and 450 kilograms of cucumbers from his mini greenhouse. The farmer estimates that after taking away the costs for the construction materials, sacks, and the seedlings, he still earned approximately \$300 from his greenhouse. Sharap is looking forward to much higher earnings next year, when his only expense will be for the new plastic cover for the greenhouse, which he estimates at about \$50. He also plans to expand the greenhouse and install a drip irrigation system to water the plants.

Sharap's wife Gulipa is also pleased with their mini greenhouse enjoys gardening very much. "The vegetables grown in bags are convenient to move from one place to another," says Gulipa Bakirova, smiling as her children proudly show the ripe red tomatoes growing in the greenhouse. "Soil diseases are also easily controlled this way."